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Scroll 1949  
Chapel Hill High School

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EDITOR .....	Janet Green
LITERARY EDITOR .....	Derith Alexander
ASSISTANT LITERARY EDITOR .....	Judy Parker
ART EDITOR .....	Jane Webb
BUSINESS MANAGER .....	Susan Fink
CIRCULATION MANAGER .....	Doris Alexander
ADVISERS .....	Mrs. Bernadine Sullivan, Mrs. Phil Highfill
TYPISTS .....	Jeanette Sloan, Mrs. Woods' Typing II Class
ASSISTANTS .....	Carl MacPherson, Charlotte Davis, Lucia Johnson, Martha Pierpont, Sarah Jane Capps, Johnsie Bennett, Sara Rose, Donald Mullis

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# Introducing the 'Scroll'

Ever since February 4, 1949 a group of people have been stirring up activity, making announcements in assembly, and running back and forth from one meeting to another. All this work has been centered on a mysterious publication, the *Scroll*.

Exactly what is it? What is its purpose? Why has it been revived after several years of nonexistence? These are questions which might well arise in the minds of readers.

The purpose of the *Scroll* is to provide a badly-needed outlet for creative writing and to give credit to those young students deserving recognition. The more intangible but most important function of the *Scroll* is to encourage creative expression.

The "why" of the *Scroll's* revival is partially inexplicable. Talk of starting a creative writing magazine has been circulating with more and more frequency for several years. A group of people became conscious of this need and with the aid of others transformed that need into action.

Officers were elected at the first meeting February 4, and the staff has been getting together regularly ever since then. At first the plans were concerned with having several mimeographed issues during the remainder of

the school year, but this plan was discarded in favor of one printed issue.

There used to be a mimeographed *Scroll* in CHHS which was issued regularly during the school year. It was discontinued in 1943, apparently from lack of workers. Since that time there has been no outlet for creative writing, except for a few poems and short essays published on occasion in the *Proconian*.

This magazine, like all cooperative enterprises, could never have been done without the help of many people. We wish to thank Jeanette Sloan and Mrs. Woods' second year typing class for their help in preparing copy. Many students have contributed extra time and effort especially in assisting money-raising projects. We especially wish to thank Mr. Pugh of the Orange Printshop for his advice.

No one knows what the future will bring in regard to the expansion or growth of the *Scroll*, but it is certain that interest and enthusiasm are vital to its continuance and to its success. We hope that readers will make suggestions, air their opinions so that in time the *Scroll* will become once more an established part of the school.

This one issue can only lay the groundwork; the real accomplishment and progress lies ahead.





# Border Vigil

The sun was as hot as any Texas midday sun could be. The chickens scratched aimlessly in the dusty streets, completely oblivious of the heat; but they were the only living creatures that were so indifferent for no soul other than myself was in sight. And I was there only because I was anticipating trouble on this side of the Rio Grande. My job was to see that no Mexicans or Spicks, as we call them, swam across the river from the southern side. For, you see, I was a member of the Border Patrol.

The Spicks use many ingenious methods of smuggling themselves into this country, without going through the usual customs regulations, and it was my duty, along with nearly five hundred other riders between El Paso and Brownsville, to keep this type of illegal entries at a minimum. It seemed to me to be a useless job for a useless cause, but laws are laws and must be enforced. Some Spicks try to sneak across on the international bridges along the river. Another scheme peculiar to the small town of Presideo, Texas, where I was stationed, was as follows: the lazy Mexican village of Otinago, which lay directly across the river from Presideo, was the northern terminus of the Kansas City, Mexico & Orient Railway which ran southward to Mexico City from the Border. The only passenger service to Otinago was a single mixed train each way daily. Every day a sleeper was shunted across the railway bridge to Presideo to be picked up by a Santa Fe train and continued on its way to Dallas. The Spicks would climb up on the rods on the underside of the car, and when it was towed across the river and left on a siding to await the Santa Fe train, they would slip out unnoticed if possible—for the townspeople sometimes report these violations—and then seek their various destinations.

It was of just such a plan that I had been warned the night before.

The Mexican train had already arrived in Otinago and the time approached for the switcher to cross the bridge with the sleeper.

I realized that there might be trouble, for there is nothing meaner to tangle with than an angry Spick, so I had my gun at my side lest I should need it, hoping nevertheless that I would not.

A locomotive whistle sounded across the

water, and I turned in that direction to see the train starting over the bridge. I mounted my horse and set off in the direction of the Presideo railway station, which doubled also as a freight depot for whatever freight might be handled through this little-known international gateway.

Although the bridge was about eye-level from where I was, I was unable to see the underside of the car because of the close-set bannisters of the bridge railing.

The locomotive whistle gave an unnecessary warning blast as the train left the bridge and crossed the deserted main street. A few chickens scrambled off the track to wait impatiently for the disturbance to pass, so they could resume their fruitless scratching between the cross ties.

The station was some three blocks from the main street, and the locomotive and I reached it at the same time. I knew the engineer and spoke to him as I dismounted.

"Hi, Mike. Seen any Spicks about?"

"Sorry to disappoint you, but they ain't none on today."

"No disappointment," I returned, as I stooped and surveyed the underside of the car from one end to the other, just to make sure.

"Say," he offered, as I mounted and started to ride away, "I have seen somethin' today that don't seem just right. A cart fulla hay sittin' in fronta Martinez's all day."

I knew Martinez well. He had been suspected many times of helping Spicks devise means of getting across the boundary, and anything that happened around his place that was in the least out of the ordinary was invariably looked upon with suspicion by the border officials. The plan was suddenly crystal clear to me! The Mexicans had hoped to lure me away from the river with the false tip and then sneak across the bridge hidden in a load of hay. Who would suspect a poor Spick farmer bringing a load of hay into Presideo in search of a customer? I should have realized that something was wrong the night before when the filthy little Mexican muchacho slipped up to my side in the bar and whispered the false information in my ear. And to think that I had given him a gold piece, too!

I urged my horse to a run and turned once more into the street which fronted the river.



## Border Vigil

There on the highway bridge was what I had expected to see. Not more than fifty yards from the near bank was a two-wheel cart drawn by a sway-back donkey and led by a stooped old Mexican farmer wearing a tattered sombrero and a soiled serapi over his shoulder. They made their way slowly across the bridge, and, when the farmer caught sight of me, he reached into a pocket of his torn shirt and drew forth a blue customs pass, holding it at arm's length before him until he reached a point about five yards from me. When he saw that I did not intend to abandon my stand before the bridge, a look of puzzlement came over his work-worn face.

"Senor, I have here my pass," he said, once more extending the card for me to see.

"Where did you get that cart and hay?" I demanded, ignoring the pass.

"Don Pelos Martinez is paying me fifty centavos to deliver it to Senor Devargas, whose ranch is two miles up the road to Alpine. See, Senor," he repeated, "I have my pass."

"Shut up!" I snapped, still angry at having been tricked so easily. "Start spreading that hay on the ground!"

"But why, Senor . . ."

He got no further, for at that moment there arose from the rear of the cart such a commotion that it looked as though the shafts would rise straight up, taking the donkey with them. Over the tail-gate vaulted three young Mexicans. No sooner had they hit the ground than they rushed at me, the leader brandishing a handleless slaughtering knife. I could do but one thing. I drew my gun and fired from the hip. The bullet struck the leader on the right side of his neck, just below the collar bone. He dropped in his tracks, face down in the dusty street. The other two men stopped stock still, too surprised and scared to attempt to escape or make a further attack on me.

The old farmer viewed the entire episode with speechless and motionless amazement, but, when I had disarmed the two men, he began an excited and incoherent babble in Spanish, thrashing his arms and apparently trying to explain to me that he had been duped and knew nothing of the three men. This I later ascertained to be true, and he was released.

Quite a crowd had gathered, or at least what

seemed a crowd after the deserted streets of a few moments before. All were pushing and jostling to get a look at the men. I sent for the Mexican border officials and turned the matter over to them. The man I had shot had bled to death quickly at my feet.

Because the shooting came in the line of duty, no charge was brought against me, but I could not help feeling what a useless tragedy it had been. It would make no impression on others trying the same trick. There would be more attempts the next day, and the next day, and the next.

The dead man was laid in the cart, his torn serapi spread over his face, and the little procession made its way slowly back across the bridge, the farmer still jabbering wildly. The Mexican officials seemed to understand no more of his explanation than I had.

The crowd of onlookers dispersed whence they had come, and a flock of chickens replaced them, attracted by the pool of blood on the ground. They pushed and jostled about the bloody sand, and soon it was devoured.

The sun shone down hot and silent on all, and the chickens returned to their aimless scratching, while I resumed my border vigil.

—Allan Markham

## My Calendar

No need to see a calendar  
To know that April's here.  
When else could diamond drops like these  
Be found in all the year?

Could any month but April have  
Such bits of rain-washed skies,  
With sunshine tangled in them  
Like smiles in friendly eyes?

Could any month but April be  
So tangy, sweet, and fair,  
With all the earth a-tingle,  
Life stirring everywhere?

Could any month but April sing  
Heart-music half so clear?  
No need to see a calendar  
To know that April's here.

—Betsy Fowler



# It's Only A Cold

"It's only a cold." How many times have I heard people say that deprecatingly! "It's only a cold." Little do they know what agonies I endure, what tortures I undergo with a cold. That stuffed-up, heavy-headed, back-achy feeling makes life a misery for me. And worse still is the general unattractiveness which always seems to accompany even my slightest case of the sniffles. The runny nose, watery eyes, splotched complexion, and hoarse, creaky voice make me wish I could die before facing the world in such a condition.

"It's only a cold." That was my mother speaking, very unsympathetically. "Dear, don't be such a hypochondriac. You're not going to die." What Mother doesn't understand is that I wish I *could* die, just for a little while. But no, matter-of-factly she forces a laxative down me, in front of the whole family, leaving me hot with embarrassment, and packs me off for a day in bed.

"It's only a cold." Now I try to comfort myself. After all, here I am in a nice warm bed with no school to worry about, no household duties—nothing, in fact, to do. Since sleeping is my favorite pastime, I immediately drop off into a refreshing nap. But by noon I am wide-awake and ready for a hot meal. "No, dear, only fruit juices for a cold," replies Mother to my request for lunch. She hands me a glass of watery-looking tomato juice and goes out, flashing me a sweet trying-to-be-sympathetic smile, which the hunger pangs in my stomach keep me from being able to return.

"It's only a cold." The words don't comfort me now. Here I am in bed with nothing, absolutely nothing to do. Mother won't let me

read. "You should rest your eyes, dear." I can't smoke. "It isn't good for your throat in that condition." And there's nothing on the radio but soap operas. At last, however, deliverance comes. The telephone rings, and it's for me! "Why, of course, Johnny," I gurgle happily, "I'd love to go to the show tonight. Just let me ask Mother."

"It's only a cold, after all, Mother. Can't I go to the show tonight?" That was I, completely recovered. After all, what's a little cold?

—Derith Alexander

## On Argyles

I'm knitting argyles!

Getting along fairly well

Except for a few minor details

Such as:

I take out the yarn . . . .

Did it come tangled up?

(It will take only two days to unravel.)

Did this set come with directions?

Or did some fiend borrow them?

(I borrow directions.)

"Anne, how do you rib?"

(Oh, I see.)

"But, Anne, how do you purl?"

(I can *purl* and *rib* now.)

"How do you get these colors started?

Anne!"

Anne: "Stick the yellow through the hole,  
Hold the thread down tight."

(Only takes a day to learn.)

"There, I've dropped a stitch!"

Teacher: "Put up your knitting now."

"But I've dropped a stitch!"

"Put up your knitting."

(End of class, stitch has dropped six rows.)

Three months and five F's later.

"I've finished them!"

(Now to find an appreciative man,  
One foot size six and one size ten!)

—Lucia Johnson

## My Favorite Walk

Come walk with me through the tall pines,  
The pines I love so well—  
Down the path to the meadow  
Where the gentle cow stands and stares,  
On to the brook where as a child  
I played and was so happy,  
Building dams with sticks and stones—  
And then back over the path and home.

—Gay Hogan

# Thirty-five Cents An Hour

It has been one of the blights on my sadly checkered career that I am perennially broke. However, the modern world has devised, along with mixmasters and pressure cookers and the 40-hour week, a system whereby ambitious girls in my position can do a good turn and earn pin money at the same time.

Babysitting is the official name for the system, but I and others who feel as I do have given this gentle art several impolite though expressive appellations I deem expedient not to put down here. The trouble is that, except for me and the few aforementioned fellow sufferers, the world at large regards sitting as a disgustingly simple way for some enterprising school girls to mulct trusting parents of their hard earned money. Grownups especially take this deplorable viewpoint. "Pooh," they scoff when I bewail the lean pocketbook that forces me to endure the nocturnal activities of scores of nasty youngsters. "Why, it's ridiculously easy . . . all you do is sit, and then demand an exorbitant 35c per hour." I have heard this refrain so often that I don't even try to object anymore. What's the use? They wouldn't believe me; nobody believes the worst things that happen on sitting expeditions—like the cherubic-faced little girl who spits and throws things—books, ash-trays, anything, or the little boy who locked me in a closet one night, or the pair that invariably develop an uncontrollable urge to indulge in a strenuous game of Indians vs. White Men at 9:00 p.m. These and other nemeses of the juvenile world usually manage a very effective destruction of the living quarters in which they operate and reduce the sitter to a state bordering on hysteria.

However, it is not only these athletic youngsters that make my life difficult for, although their method of operation exceeds most others in outward manifestations, the more subtle type can be very effective indeed. There is the quibbler, who mildly but persistently disagrees with me on every minor point that comes up; no one thing seems worth making a scene over, but the total effect makes me realize where the Spanish Inquisition got its torture ideas. There is the whiner, the child who makes me read to him stiflingly whimsical accounts of Little Bobo and his New Blue Overcoat, or, worse still, long

treatises on the inner workings of a locomotive engine cut down to kindergarten vocabulary, and a dozen other disagreeable children who delight in slowly wearing me down to a nub. Worst of these, however, is the blasé type. This young sophisticate is bored with his humdrum existence; nothing delights him that holds less thrills than a roller-coaster ride, and he considers all sitters made especially to provide him with much-needed excitement. Sensation must follow sensation if I wish to keep him from getting his thrill by giving me a hot foot or by some other diabolical method. His attitude is a belligerent "amuse me" one and I spend the entire evening frantically doing everything from imitating Al Jolsen to playing buffalo to his Chief Sitting Bull.

I, alas, am afraid of even the most harmless-looking dogs and the family's pooch very often has a disastrous effect on my piece of mind. Bowser, lying ominously alert under the piano, is enough to reduce me to a state of screaming meamies, and I have often retreated behind locked doors when a particularly large specimen started to take a turn about the room. Most dogs also seem to have kidney trouble, always having to go out and come back in. The worst experience, however, was an apparently calm evening until the dog had a fit, complete with foam at the mouth and convulsions, but let us pass over that hideous experience with a veil.

Infants can also contribute to the sitter's mental exhaustion, even though their somewhat limited capacities forbid the more spectacular types of torture. Baby's only effective weapons are his lungs, but these are put into use without restraint. Imagine my horror to see the apple of his mother's eye vociferating in the most violent manner and banging his head against the bars of his crib until he is blue in the face. This situation never fails to reduce me to a jellyfish. Junior may be merely disgruntled because he doesn't like the color of the nightshirt he is wearing, or he may be fast succumbing to the violent stages of some dread disease like diphtheria or scarlet fever. I pace the floor feverishly, listening to the alarming sounds issuing from the bedroom and wondering whether or not to summon the authorities. Oh, but if I did it would surely



# The Highwayman

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the  
gusty trees,  
The moon was a ghostly galleon, tossed upon  
cloudy seas,  
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the  
purple moor,  
And the highwayman came driving—driving—  
driving—  
The highwayman came driving, up to the old  
inn door.

He'd a sailor cap on his forehead, a boy scout  
tie at his chin.  
His breeches were a rather uncertain tan and  
his coat was of raccoon skin;  
It sagged and bagged around him. His loafers  
were falling apart!  
And he drove with a rattly banging—banging—  
banging—  
His old jalopy banging, in time to his bump-  
ing heart.

Over the cobbles he rattled and bounced in the  
dark inn-yard.  
He tossed a rock at the shutters, but all was  
locked and barred.  
He gave a wolf-call 'neath the window, and who  
should be waiting there  
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
Bess, the landlord's daughter,

## Thirty-five Cents An Hour

turn out to be a stuck safety pin! Very well, I  
shan't. I wrestle with this awful dilemma  
through the hours. Inevitably five minutes be-  
fore the parents return, Junior drops off into  
blissful slumber and I, after smiling weakly  
what an angel little Junior is—simply no trouble  
at all—trotted off to get some much-needed  
sleep.

Time after time I have vowed never again to  
reduce myself to such depths in the name of  
youth, but always one glance at my denuded  
pocketbook sends me back into the toils. It just  
goes to show what people will do for money.  
Bankruptcy drives some to suicide but it drives  
me to babysitting; sometimes I think the suicides  
are the lucky ones.

—Charlotte Davis

Attempting to disentangle some gum from her  
long black hair.

And dark in the dark old inn-yard an automobile  
door creaked!  
For out of the landlord's Ford peered a face  
that was white and peaked.  
It was Tim, the chauffeur, listening, his crew-  
cut rumpled high,  
For he'd a crush on the landlord's daughter,  
The landlord's darling daughter,  
Dumb as an ox he listened, and he heard the  
delinquent sigh:

"Just one hug now, my sweetheart. I'm after  
a prize tonight!  
I'm robbing a safe at the First National before  
the morning light;  
Yet, if they're on my trail, and hound me  
through the day,  
Then look for me by moonlight,  
Watch for me by moonlight,  
I'd come to thee by moonlight if Hell should  
bar the way!

He did not come at dawning. He did not come at  
noon;  
And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of  
the moon,  
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping  
the purple moor,  
All Scotland yard come driving—driving—  
driving—  
A carload of cops came driving, up to the old  
inn door.

They showed a search-warrant to the landlord,  
and filled up on his gin.

They hand-cuffed and gagged his daughter, and  
tied her from toe to chin  
To the foot of her bed by the window, planted  
as a decoy  
To wait for her crook in the moonlight, watch  
for him by moonlight,  
And when he came in the moonlight, to nab the  
delinquent boy.  
Rattle, rattle! Rattle, rattle! Had they heard  
it?  
The jalopy drawing near;

# Aunt Lizzy's Antique Vase

Have you ever heard of a trivial incident changing a woman's life? After you've heard what happened to my old Aunt Lizzy, down at Tompkins Corner, you'll know what I mean.

Until one day a few summers ago, Uncle Luger had been as henpecked as a rooster whose mate suddenly learned to crow. In fact, since his marriage to Aunt Lizzy twenty years before, he had lived a one-word existence, yes. This was all the more reason for his complete amazement when he found himself at the head of the household. Although I don't think Uncle Luger suspected the old antique vase had anything to do with his sudden rise to power; he did know that my aunt suddenly lost all interest in her antique. Aunt Lizzy and I were the only two people in the family who knew the real secret of the vase.

I remember the day the antique vase was delivered. It was one of those hot summer days when people fried eggs on the sidewalk, drank tall lemonades, and talked of nothing but the unseasonable weather. A thunderstorm had blown up, sending the egg friers indoors and washing out a picnic that Aunt Lizzy had planned for the first day of my visit to Tompkins Corners. I was downhearted, of course,

but small boys improvise quickly, and soon I was indoors improvising.

I sat on the parlor floor and gazed at a hall shelf littered with an odd-looking assortment of knickknacks. The vases were enemy ships, and I picked them off with rubberband cannonballs. Uncle Luger watched me from his easy chair, but when I reached toward the shelf to knock out one of the "ships," he jumped to his feet.

"No, Joey," he yelled. "Don't touch those dark trinkets."

I stepped back and looked at him stupidly. "Why not, Uncle Luger?" I asked. "Are they valuable?"

"Not worth a darn, but they belong to Liz."

Aunt Lizzy's deep voice boomed from the kitchen. "Luger, did you call me?"

"No, Liz, just talking to Joey here."

"Mind, keep out of mischief. Keep away from those antiques."

"Yes, Liz."

"Uncle Luger," I whispered. "Why doesn't she want us to touch her old junk?"

Without answering, Uncle Luger walked over to the shelf and picked up a dirty yellow vase, gazed at it, and scratched his head. "See this,"

## The Highwayman

Rattle, rattle! Rattle, rattle! in the stillness.

Were they deaf that they did not hear?  
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow  
of the hill,

The highwayman came driving, driving, driving!

The highwayman came driving! The cops stood  
straight and still.

Rattle! in the frosty silence. Rattle! in the echoing  
night.

Nearer he came and nearer! The cops doused  
every light.

They stood there poised for a moment, they  
drew a final breath,

Then "attack signal" split the moonlight, a  
whistle shattered the moonlight,

They plunged for the boy in the moonlight and  
saved his untimely death.

And still of a summer's day they say, when the  
wind is in the trees,

When sailors out on the ocean are tossed on  
foaming seas,

When the sun is high above her, then Bess, so  
white and pale,

The landlord's daughter, taxis—taxis—taxis—  
The landlord's daughter taxis, down to the city  
jail.

She says a word to the warden, he clangs open  
the massive door.

And carrying a precious burden she passes the  
threshold o'er.

She goes to see her loved one, to him her bundle  
will take.

And with a kiss presents him—presents him—  
presents him—

With a kiss presents him a file baked into a cake!

—Martha Pierpont



## Aunt Lizzy's Antique Vase

he finally said in a low voice. "This silly looking piece of trash dates back to Louis the—the somebody of France."

"No," I gasped, trying to sound more amazed than I was.

"Yup, a genuine antique."

"How do you know?"

"I can't rightly say, Joey. Ask your Aunt Lizzy; she knows."

"Knows what?" asked Aunt Lizzy from the kitchen doorway.

"I was just telling Joey about the Louis the—the—"

"The Fourteenth," she snapped. She turned away from Uncle Luger and patted my head. "He's probably gotten you all mixed up, child. Let me tell you the real story about all these rare pieces."

Uncle Luger slipped back to his easy chair and hid behind his newspaper. Aunt Lizzy took my hand and led me to the shelf, seemingly pleased with my apparent interest in the old junk.

"Our family—your mother's and mine, that is—has a very distinguished past, you know."

"How come, Aunt Lizzy?"

"We date back to William the Conqueror. That's about 900 years, you know."

"We must be pretty old," spoke Uncle Luger from behind his newspaper. I laughed, but Aunt Lizzy didn't think the remark funny. She strode over to the easy chair and pulled the newspaper out of Uncle Luger's hands. His grin faded as her mouth opened.

"Luger," she snapped, "none of your bright remarks." Her long finger waved in his face. "Just because your family history isn't bright, please don't condemn mine."

"No, Liz, I didn't mean—"

"You've said enough."

"Yes, Liz."

The declaration of war was ended by the ringing of the front door bell.

"Luger, you heard the bell," said Aunt Lizzy impatiently.

"Yes, Liz," he replied as he hurried to the door. "It's a package," he called from the hall. "It's for you, Liz."

She ran into the hall, and I followed. A large package had been placed on the floor.

Uncle Luger scratched his head with one hand and held the bill of sale with the other.

"Must be a mistake, buddy," he said to the expressman who stood in the doorway. "We didn't order anything from New York."

"Says here—"

"Never mind the explanation, my good man," said Aunt Lizzy. "It's for us all right."

"It is?" asked Uncle Luger. "Do you know there's a \$150 C.O.D. on it?"

"Certainly, Luger. Pay the good man."

"What?"

"Pay the man, Luger. This is a little surprise."

"Quite a big surprise, I'd say."

"It's a rare family heirloom."

"What? Another piece of—"

"Pay the man."

Uncle Luger made out a check for the amount. The expressman took it and departed with a sympathetic shake of his head. Aunt Lizzy had already begun to unwrap the package.

"What is it?" I asked with more enthusiasm than Uncle Luger had shown. "Is it another antique?"

"Of course, child. I got it direct from an old English castle."

"Just what makes it an heirloom?" asked Uncle Luger in a disgusted tone.

"Let me finish. The old English castle is owned by a direct descendant of William the Conqueror."

"And since you—your family, that is, also happened to be directly descended from William the—"

"Exactly," she interrupted. "I feel it an honor to own this rare piece."

Aunt Lizzy worked swiftly with the wrapping and finally had the package opened. With a great deal of ceremony she reached in and pulled out a dirty old vase. I shook my head with disappointment, and Uncle Luger grunted with apparent disgust. The antique was even dirtier than the Louis vase and very much smaller.

"Remarkable!" gasped Aunt Lizzy in seeming ecstasy. "What a rare looking piece."

"Looks kind of cheap to me," said Uncle Luger.

## Aunt Lizzy's Antique Vase

"What?"

"I mean—"

"Can't you tell by looking at it that it's a rare piece?"

"Well, for \$150 it's—"

"It's a steal, a remarkable find, on my part."

"Yes, Liz, remarkable."

The vase was given a position of honor on the hall shelf, and for two months Uncle Luger and I learned of its history. Each ugly chip in the vase seemed to have a significance. The big chip on the base was supposed to have an important history all its own.

"See that big chip?" said Aunt Lizzy, for what was probably the tenth time. "My ancestor, kin to William the Conqueror, was responsible for that at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, you know."

"What did he do, drop it?" asked Uncle Luger in an amused tone.

"Certainly not! It's a known historical fact that my ancestor saved William's life with this vase."

"How did he do it, Aunt Lizzy?" I asked with boyish enthusiasm.

"This vase, being carried by my ancestor, deflected an arrow that was aimed at William."

"Remarkable," laughed Uncle Luger. "How do you know it's true?"

"It's direct from an old manuscript found in the castle, a truly great document."

"What does it cost?" asked Uncle Luger.

"I don't think it's for sale. It's—it's priceless."

"Not worth anything, huh?"

"Luger, no witticisms, please. This is a very important moment in our lives."

"Yes, Liz, very important."

\* \* \*

Each day, Uncle Luger's life became more and more unbearable. Aunt Lizzy practically lived in the past. She always reminded us that she got her facts by direct letter from New York, and we needed little reminding that we got them by direct word from her. I was inclined to believe the stories, but Uncle Luger never weakened.

"There's something funny about that piece of junk, Joey," he said one day when we were alone in the house.

"Maybe it did happen, Uncle Luger. Maybe the vase really did save William's life."

"Maybe it did and maybe it didn't," answered Uncle Luger. "All I know is, it's not saving mine."

After a moment of silence and deep thought on my part, I popped out with a thinly veiled question. "What if the vase got broken, Uncle Luger?" I asked shamelessly.

"What do you mean, Joey?"

"Well, if it got broken, accidentally like, maybe Aunt Lizzy'd forget about it."

"She'd be mighty angry."

"Not if she broke it herself."

"I see what you mean, Joey."

I don't know how Uncle Luger planned the crime, but he left the room in a big hurry. He came back in a moment with a thin piece of white thread. I scratched my head when I saw him tie one end of the thread to the antique vase, but, when he tied the other end to the screen door, I knew what he had in mind.

"This ought to do the trick," he said. "She'll be mad for months, but that would be better than listening to the history of the darn vase for the best years of our lives."

"Sure would," I agreed.

I began to feel a touch of guilt when I heard Aunt Lizzy's feet on the porch steps. Uncle Luger must have felt the same way, because he shook quietly to himself and wiped the perspiration from his wrinkled brow.

"She's come home, Joey," he whispered nervously. "Keep your fingers crossed."

Aunt Lizzy opened the screen door in her usual forceful manner, and the antique crashed to the floor in pieces. A look of dismay spread rapidly over her face. "What have I done?" she moaned. "What have I done?"

Uncle Luger ran to her aid. I noticed that he managed to pick up the piece of white thread and put it in his pocket.

"It's all right, Liz darling," he consoled her. "Maybe we can have it fixed."

"It's in a thousand pieces," she sobbed. "Never, never. It's gone for good."

I got down on my hands and knees and made a pretense of picking up the pieces. Aunt Lizzy dropped down beside me. I picked up the biggest piece and looked at it carefully. It had some lettering on its inside surface. Naturally curious, I read it. Aunt Lizzy noticed my foolish-looking grin and snatched the piece of vase



## Song For Teachers of Poetry

You teach us not to climb to meet a song,  
But bring it down, an earthy sodden thing.  
We never see the leaping lines that soar,  
The breathless beauty of the words that sing!

You brand the genius soul-born works with  
words,  
High-sounding, meaningless, and hollow-  
wrong.

You call it old, significant, or new  
But never call it what it is, a song!

We thrust our rude young hands in poets'  
hearts,  
Break down their deathless living in one day.  
They cast their greatest thoughts in these gold  
notes.

What more is there for us, unlearned, to say?

—Janet Green

## Winter Day

The dull wind moans and cries aloud,  
And sighing low, the grey rain weeps,  
While overhead the clouds frown down  
Upon the sodden earthen heaps.

The naked trees bend toward the ground  
As if to find some shelter there;  
But straining low, they only find  
The cold, cold earth, windswept and bare.

—Derith Alexander

## Old Books

O, in these volumes grey with dust of years,  
That lie concealed in some neglected corner—  
The cover cracked and stained, the letters gold  
That spelled the title now unreadable—  
The beauty that was yesterday is found  
Of lands and men and kings that once were  
crowned

And lived in pomp and careless pageantry,  
But now entombed, remote and past. They speak  
Of quaint and curious sermons, fragile odes  
And other rimes that tell of sweetest singing,  
Forgotten lore, enchantments gone these ages.  
A tired fragrance drifts up from the pages  
Where ancient blooms lie crumbled twixt the  
leaves;

A musty sunlight creeps with gentle fingers  
Between the shelves. Ah, dear forgotten men,  
Your lives and loves remain among this dust,  
Until someone shall idly lift the cover,  
And all your splendor and your charm discover.

—Charlotte Davis

## Spring

Spring, beautiful spring,  
Is more than a season!  
It's a time when a girl  
Might lose her reason  
And listen to things that  
A girl shouldn't oughter . . .  
That's what my pop  
Says to his daughter!

—Jackie Crawford

## Aunt Lizzy's Antique Vase

from my hand. She read the lettering and became as pale as last week's laundry.

"Why, this—this can't be true," she sputtered. "It just can't be true."

"What?" asked Uncle Luger in a puzzled tone.

"Nothing at all. Joey, take all these pieces and throw them in the trash can."

"But, Aunt Lizzy—"

"I've got something nice for supper," she interrupted with a complete change of subject. "After all, the world hasn't come to an end."

"Are you feeling all right?" asked Uncle Luger.

—

"Certainly, Luger dear. You go into the parlor and read the paper. You won't need to help me tonight."

Uncle Luger scratched his head in amazement and walked into the parlor. I picked up the pieces of the antique vase and took them to the trash can on the back porch.

Before throwing away the last piece, I read the lettering once more. It simply said, "Made exclusively for Tillingham's Department Store, Brooklyn, New York, 1922. Guaranteed genuine antique."

—Margaret Gutierrez

# Ghost Manor

It began to rain. Rain gathered on the leaves and dripped to the ground in tiny streams. It came down faster, grabbing at the dirt and transforming it into sticky mud. It gathered in the gutters and overflowed the clogged rainpipes. It dripped through cracked shingles and appeared in tiny pools on the warped floor.

Sitting in a stalled car, ten miles from nowhere, I drummed my fingers on the steering wheel while I contemplated my next move. I was supposed to have been in Midville by now, the main speaker at a big banquet. Now I could not imagine what had driven me to come out to some small insignificant town just to give a lecture. I lit a cigarette and thought over my problem. I could either go out and try to find a farmhouse and spend the night there, or I could sleep in the car. The former idea appealing to me more; I pulled my coat around me and stepped out into the fading twilight.

I had been groping my way about in the mud for almost fifteen minutes when I happened to see an overgrown path leading off to my right. Upon closer examination I found it to be an old driveway, overgrown with weeds and brambles. As I walked along it the rain fell down steadily soaking me to the bone, and branches and twigs caught at my clothing like grasping fingers.

When I came around a sharp turn in the driveway, the manor suddenly loomed into view. A shudder ran through me. The manor stood proud and solemn, indestructible with a "dare-not-enter-me" air. Shingles were missing at odd intervals, and a few-nailed shutters were flapping angrily with the rising wind.

I stepped on the porch, and the hollow sound echoed through the drizzling night. The huge oak door was barred tightly from within, but, after I had examined a few of the windows, at the back of the house, I finally found one which was unbarred. I raised this a little and crawled through. The air inside was damp, musty and cold and made me sneeze. Although I strained my eyes in the gloomy darkness, I could see little, so I struck a match. Shielding it from the numerous drafts, I looked around the room in which I was standing. A candle was sitting on a near-by table, and I lit it. Then holding it up, I scrutinized my surroundings. This was evidently

the kitchen. A huge iron range stood rusting in one corner amid cobwebs and dust, and in another a big oak table stood. I moved out of the kitchen, through the dining room, and into a great hall. The floor of the hall was stone and my footsteps made hollow, echoing sounds as I walked, while the flickering light of the candle made ghostly figures dance along the walls.

I walked up the stone stairs, pushing away the cobwebs as I went. At the top of the stairs ran a long corridor, along which were many bedrooms, and at the very end was an empty ballroom. I opened the door at the opposite end of the corridor and found myself in the master bedroom. I stepped inside and an odd feeling crept over me. The atmosphere was warm and there was a peculiar scent in the air—akin to that of wilted roses. At one end of the room a small fireplace was built, over which hung a large painting covered with a sheet. At the other end of the room a bed was mounted on a raised platform. Curtains of faded velvet, visibly rotting, hung over the bed. I suddenly shuddered violently and walked quickly out of the room, shutting the door behind me carefully.

I went downstairs again and entered a small room. It appeared to have been a small study and was sparsely furnished. Breaking up an old chair, I built a small fire in the fireplace, and sitting down on a moth-eaten sofa, I stretched my weary limbs and tried to get dry.

I then pondered over several questions which had arisen in my mind. First, why was the old house rotting away, deserted? Where was the previous occupant and why did he leave? Where was this place? How far away was Midville? And last, what was so strange about the master bedroom?

As I lay thinking about these things, I noticed a small book lying on the floor. I picked it up and, oddly enough, it was not covered with dust and was dry and intact. I opened the cover and on the fly leaf "Memoirs of Louise" was written in a beautiful fine script. The rest of the pages were covered with the same delicate handwriting. I turned to the first entry and noticed that it was dated December 21, 1891. I tried to read it but the handwriting was too small for me to decipher in the fading light of the fire, so I



## Ghost Manor

laid it aside and stretching full length on the sofa, I promptly went to sleep.

I woke with a start and sprang from the sofa as I felt something soft and smooth brush by me, but I could see nothing in the darkness. I suddenly stiffened as the warm odor of faded roses reached my nostrils. Although I had been in a drowsy state before, every sense was acutely sharp by now—the book was gone! I put my head in my hands and tried to reason things out, but I seemed to run into a blind alley everywhere I turned.

I suddenly felt that I could not stay in this room any longer. I had to get to the bottom of this mystery—if there was one! I had the feeling that the clue to it lay somewhere in the master bedroom! I lit a candle and following the lingering odor went upstairs into the master bedroom. As I stood in the doorway, cold sweat began to collect on my forehead for I distinctly remembered that I had shut the door behind me when I had left there earlier in the evening. I walked slowly into the room. The air in it was much warmer than it had been in the corridor. As I stood there surveying the scene by the flickering light of my candle, the flame suddenly went out as if some inhuman hand had snuffed it. The door behind me slammed shut and I stood there terrified. Then shaking in every limb of my body I lit the candle again with an unsteady hand and cupped my hand around it. As the small glow penetrated the room, I spied the little diary which I had found downstairs lying on the floor. I picked it up in trembling fingers and turning to the first entry began to read:

“Tonight the wind grows loud, the rain beats down, and a setting for murder is laid in this bewitched house . . .”

The book suddenly vibrated frantically and flung itself across the room. I jumped after it, retrieved it, and hugged it close to me. Nothing happened for a few minutes, so I stuffed the book into my shirt and buttoned my coat over it. Then I stiffened as I heard a low, wailing sound. The wail rose louder and louder until it reached such an intensity that I clamped my hands over my ears to keep my eardrums from bursting. The sound was repeated three times, each time starting as a barely audible sound and rising until it shook the house with its vibra-

tions. And then as suddenly as it began it stopped. At the far end of the room a glow began to form. I felt no fear now at its formation, only mute wonder. The glow resembled a mist and gradually began to move toward me. As it moved it took on the shape and size of a woman with long flowing hair. The color of the light never changed and it moved closer and closer to me. It came to about three feet in front of me and then stopped. The dead silence which prevailed was terrifying. And then the thing spoke.

“Give it to me!” it said. The voice was low and soft, like music, and yet it held a determination that was deep and tense.

“Give the book to me!” it repeated.

I did not speak right away, and when I did, I did not recognize my own voice.

“No!” I said.

“Give me the book!” it demanded.

By now I had gathered most of my senses together, and my voice was firm.

“I won’t!” I repeated grimly.

The figure gave a cry and leaped at me. I jumped back and grabbed at something behind me. It was the sheet that covered the picture. It fell to the floor and the figure suddenly disappeared but not before I had realized her resemblance to the young girl in the portrait. I looked at the sheet on the floor and found it to be covered with dark rust-colored stains which I knew to be blood. This I could not take! I dropped the sheet as if it had bitten me and fled from the room. I somehow found the kitchen and leaped out the window and then I felt myself falling down—down—down before I struck my head on something hard.

When I came to my senses I was sitting in my car. It was bright daylight. How had I gotten here? I got out of the car and walked down the road. Although I searched thoroughly for almost an hour, I found no trace of the path leading to the manor. I finally returned to the car again and stepped on the starter. The engine caught at once, and I started over the bumpy road in search for Midville.

When I finally reached my destination, I secured a room in a hotel, and while unpacking, I carefully went over all the events of the night before. I could not have dreamed it all. I knew

# His Last Joke

Haw! Haw! Haw! The joker's laughter rang out raucously at the plight of his brother, whose head was completely enveloped in a shiny new aluminum bucket, bought especially for the occasion of this, James's latest practical joke. Recovering from the occasion of the moment, Roger removed the pail from his head and revealed to the world a slightly apoplectic face. Carefully and fastidiously, he drew a large white handkerchief from his pocket and began to wipe away the water which was still running merrily down his face as if in a hurry to reach and ruin his expensive new serge suit.

"James, you . . . ."

He started to say something but stopped when he found that he couldn't control his voice because of the fury in it. Swearing inwardly to relieve himself, he sat down on an easy chair and continued dabbing at his face and suit.

Then he broke out angrily, "You'll kill someone yet with your stupid jokes. And I hope it's yourself!"

James Caxton paid no attention to his brother, but kept on laughing, silently and helplessly now, his fat stomach bouncing up and down, keeping time with his laughter. James's laugh-

## Ghost Manor

I had been in that house as surely as I am now relating this tale. Then suddenly I remembered the book!— the book! Nervously I unbuttoned my shirt and took the object out. As I handled it a piece of paper fluttered to the floor. I picked it up and found it to be the obituary of Louise McKearen, who had been *murdered* on December 20, 1891. The first entry in the book was dated exactly one day after Louise McKearen had died! Then to my astonishment the book in my hand suddenly crumbled away to dust.

The book might have solved the mystery of that rainy night. It might have answered the questions which had been lodged in my mind. No one will ever know—for I have searched every inch of ground in that area and no trace of Ghost Manor have I ever found!

—Margaret Ferguson

ter was not at all pleasant, for it expressed his enjoyment of his victim's humiliation and indignation. This trait earned him much dislike, but he did not realize it, since he was one of those individuals who think they are perfect, can do no wrong, and that the whole world loves them. This was blessed ignorance for James, who, instead of universal good will, had just the opposite. He finally realized this later, too late.

His paroxysm of laughter finally subsiding, James, exhausted by his merriment, leaned weakly against the table behind him, a curio case filled with jade Buddhas, daggers with weirdly carved silver handles, and other Oriental objects.

Robert's anger had by now passed away, and he felt only a tolerant contempt for the oldest imbecilic Caxton, contempt also for himself for abiding his bachelor brother and his jokes. But what could he do? He was financially dependent on the wealthy James, due to many successive business failures. Even his wife's spending money came from his brother.

"By the way, James, I'll need \$100 tomorrow. My wife wants to do some shopping."

"All right, I'll write you a check, but I'm getting tired of supporting you and Mary in your extravagant living."

"Well, you don't want us to starve, do you? It would look queer in the papers. 'Brother of Wealthy Country Resident and Wife Starve in Hovel.' You know I don't like to live on charity any more than you like to give it, so let's say no more about it."

"Perhaps I shall die some day soon and leave you all my money."

"That would certainly be very convenient. Why don't you arrange it?"

"I'll see what I can do about it. And that reminds me, I'll be expecting you tomorrow afternoon."

"Tomorrow? Why the sudden invitation? Have you thought up a bigger and better joke to play on me then?"

Answering with a chuckle and a wink intended to be sly, James said, "I wonder why you are so suspicious of me?"

"That is a hard question. If you don't mind, I'll bring a friend along to protect me from my



## His Last Joke

big bad brother. May I use your telephone now to call him?"

"The nearest telephone is two miles down the road. I've been trying to get one for the longest time but haven't been able to. I'm beginning to believe that the governor is absolutely right when he says that the phone companies don't want to go out into the country. Maybe you can help me. You know the head of the telephone company, don't you?"

"Yes, but isn't your name already on the waiting list?"

"Certainly, but I may have to wait."

"No! Why, you poor fellow, how will you ever stand it?"

"Don't joke, Roger. It doesn't become you. Is that a horn I hear out front?"

"Must be Mary. I told her to come about this time."

Grabbing up his coat, Roger strode out the door.

As he got into the car, James called to him, "Don't expect the usual marvelous dinner. My cook and my butler quit yesterday, so I'm all alone out here until I can get another couple."

\* \* \*

"Taxi! Taxi!"

When the cab drew up in front of the Country Club, the man who had hailed it got in first, followed by another younger man.

After giving the address, the first man turned to the second and said, "What a day! Never again will I play three rounds in one day."

On getting only a weary sigh from his comrade, Roger continued, "I must be getting old. I'm dead tired after playing only a few hours, a simple feat in my younger, more athletic days."

This time his companion summoned enough energy to reply. "However tired you are, hadn't you rather play as many more hours than do what we've got to do now?"

"Than do what we've got to do . . . ? Oh, you mean spend an afternoon with my dearly beloved brother. I guess you're right, but, although I don't hold any great love for . . ."

"I don't see how you could! For years he's made you the victim of his craziest, most em-

barrassing jokes. It's a wonder you don't hate him with a passion."

"Who said I don't? It's hard to keep from doing something violent sometimes, but I kind of feel that his supporting me almost makes up for my being the butt of his silly tricks. I must admit, though, that no matter how callous and unbrotherly it seems, I sometimes wish that he would *drop dead*."

The conversation continued along these lines until at last the cab drew up in front of James's large house.

"That'll be \$2.00, mister."

Roger held out the money in his gloved hand.

"Here you are, cabbie. Come back in about two hours to pick us up."

As they went up the walk with the air of naughty schoolboys being taken to the principal's office, the two men observed that the front door was standing slightly ajar and this a cold March afternoon! Reaching the door, Roger pushed it completely open, then gave a cry of astonishment. Standing on tiptoe to see over Roger, who was effectively blocking the doorway, his friend caught a glimpse of what Roger had seen and was dumbfounded.

Turning quickly around, Roger shoved him toward the walk, and cried, "Hurry! Phone for a doctor. He may still be alive. And the police, too. Run, man, don't waste time!"

As the young man took to his heels down the long flagstone walk, Roger stepped into the room and looked once more at James, lying face down in front of the curio case, the silver dagger in his back gleaming in the late afternoon sunlight streaming through the open door. With no feeling of sorrow, only curiosity and perhaps gladness that at last he would be free of all practical joking and would have a fortune, Roger walked calmly to his brother and bent over him to see if he were really dead. At the touch of his hand, James could no longer restrain himself. He sat up quickly and let out with great yells of laughter. Roger started back horrified. Was this how the dead were resurrected? Then he felt a wave of fury sweeping over him. Another joke! A trick dagger! How stupid he had been. With hate in his eyes he regarded James, sitting on the floor, convulsed with laughter. Still glaring at

## His Last Joke

the joker, Roger rose. He drew the knife from James's back and set it on the curio case. As he did so, he saw something in the case that made the expression on his face change from that of anger to discovery. Here was his chance, handed him on a silver platter. Looking once more at James to be sure he was not watching, Roger quietly lifted the lid of the table and drew from its sheath a silver-handled dagger. Then he spoke collectedly to his brother, who was still laughing.

"Do you remember what I said yesterday? That you would kill someone yet with your jokes? I was right. You have killed someone—yourself!"

As James looked up with a startled expression, he felt a knife being driven deep into his back.

\* \* \*

After arranging the body as it had been when he arrived, being careful, of course, to get no blood on himself, Roger put the trick knife in a drawer and locked it. Then he paused. What more was there to do? Nothing. James had done everything for him. With disgust he eyed the bloody mess on the floor. Blood! Had his comrade noted the absence of blood? No, he had not had time. It was lucky that Roger had pushed him out the door so quickly.

Whoever said there was no such thing as the perfect murder was surely mistaken, for here was an example of it, lying on its face before him. With that comforting thought, Roger settled down to contemplate his handiwork and await the arrival of the police.

—Julia Shields

## Twilight

When at the close of a sunny day  
The clouds sigh and drift away  
So follows soon the dying sun  
Leading the sunbeams one by one.  
The purple dusk creeps over the hill  
And low comes calling, "Whip-poor-will"  
The stars their nightly vigil keep;  
The birds are still, the night is sweet.

—Margaret Ferguson

## Man Trouble

I'm sure I'm not  
So very shy  
I'm old enough now  
Not to cry  
I try to smile  
And be so gay  
And always have  
Nice things to say.  
Why can't I get a man?

My eyes are good  
I don't wear glasses  
I'm not a flirt  
I don't make passes  
My teeth are straight  
They never buck  
I make good grades  
I have good luck  
Why can't I get a man?

My figure's———well  
It could be worse  
I don't shout  
I never curse  
I can swim  
And even dive  
Drive a car  
And still survive  
Why can't I get a man?

My feet aren't flat  
My knees don't knock  
My nerves can stand  
Most any shock  
What is it then  
That I so lack  
That keeps the males  
All standing back  
Why can't I get a man?

—Johnsie Bennett

## The Circus

A circus came to town one day  
A welcome sight to see;  
The monkeys gave a fine display  
Of what we used to be.

—Richard Vaughan





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